

Evaluation of the “I’m WISE” Curriculum Executive Summary

This report summarizes the third year evaluation results of the “I’m WISE” curriculum implemented through WISE (Working to Institutionalize Sexuality Education) New York located at the Student Support Services Center of the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership, and the Rochester City School District. It contains results of student and teacher surveys both before and after learning or teaching the “I’m WISE” (Well-physically, Intellectually, Socially and Emotionally) curriculum. This report presents student progress on outcomes of the “I’m WISE” curriculum, as well as teacher experiences and stakeholder support for the curriculum.

The “I’m WISE” curriculum was designed to sequentially and age appropriately teach 4th through 6th grade students to:

- Communicate healthy and safe sexuality, growth, and development messages (including abstinence) with parents and seek their help and support;
- Communicate healthy and safe sexuality, growth, and development messages in school with teachers and peers and seek their help and support;
- Select and use healthy, safe, and respectful strategies versus unhealthy, unsafe, and disrespectful strategies at home and at school;
- Understand and resist unhealthy, unsafe, and disrespectful behavior and social pressures;
- Use healthy and respectful communication skills to enhance relationship building and sexual health;
- Plan, monitor, adapt and achieve health and sexuality goals

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Students’ average level of knowledge about *abstinence, sexuality, and making safe and healthy choices* increased after receiving the “I’m WISE” curriculum.
- Students placed increased importance on abstinence (not having sex) after receiving the “I’m WISE” curriculum.
- All students in grades 5 and 6 increased their ability to talk respectfully about sexuality with their peers.
- Male students asked their parents and trusted family members more questions following the curriculum.
- Students placed increased importance on *communicating with their teachers* after learning the “I’m WISE” curriculum.
- After participating in the curriculum 52% of students indicated that they asked their teachers “most” or “all” of their questions, compared with 26% before.
- Teachers *increased their comfort* with the curriculum and *confidence* in answering students’ and parents’ *questions*.

Key Findings

Students demonstrated increased knowledge of abstinence, sexuality, and making safe and healthy choices. Students rated their knowledge in these areas higher after learning the “I’m WISE” curriculum. Change in all three of these outcomes was driven by 5th and 6th grade students, who showed the greatest improvement in knowledge.

I learned to not have sex at a young age and to use a condom if you are a grown up.

“I’m WISE” Student

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Students placed varying levels of importance on “I’m WISE” topics, including contraception and staying safe and healthy. Sixth grade students learned about the importance of contraception as part of the “I’m WISE” curriculum, and placed more importance on contraception after receiving the curriculum. All students placed high importance on staying safe and healthy both before and after receiving the curriculum, indicating that the “I’m WISE” curriculum may have helped to reinforce students’ knowledge and strategies in areas that they already value and identified as important.

All students improved their communication skills with their teachers, parents and/or trusted family members, and classmates after learning the “I’m WISE” curriculum.

Additionally, teachers perceived that their students’ communication skills improved. Students demonstrated improvement by asking questions about sexuality during class, and talking to their parents or trusted adult while at home.

I asked my parents questions and learned from them.

“I’m WISE” Student

I had a question about sexuality, so I told my teacher.

“I’m WISE” Student

Teachers felt comfortable teaching the “I’m WISE” curriculum topics and felt confident answering most questions from students and parents. They were most comfortable teaching students about how their bodies are growing and changing and least comfortable and confident teaching students about sexuality.

I was amazed at how open so many of my students were about many of the topics we discussed and also it was interesting to hear some of the questions my students had. Many were comfortable asking the questions aloud in class.

Teacher

After teaching the “I’m WISE” curriculum, all but two teachers (93%) indicated they were *supportive* or *very supportive* of the school providing the WISE sexuality education curriculum to their students. They perceived support for the curriculum from other stakeholders, including high levels of perceived support from colleagues/ fellow teachers.

Conclusion

Findings suggest that the “I’m WISE” curriculum is successfully meeting its goals in the areas of sexuality, growth and development, communication and goal setting. Students have increased knowledge, place increased importance on healthy growth and sexuality related indicators, and have improved communication and goal setting skills after learning the “I’m WISE” curriculum. Teachers perceived substantial growth in their students’ communication skills following the curriculum. Older students improved more, which could be due to maturity or having received several years of the sequential curriculum.

Although growth in knowledge and importance about topics like abstinence were significant overall, they were generally more significant for female students and older students. Future inquiries should focus on differences in student outcomes based on their age as well as the number of consecutive years of the sequential curriculum students receive.

Findings also suggest that teachers feel more prepared and able to teach the curriculum effectively, including increased confidence and comfort in answering questions from parents and students. Teachers and other in-school staff were perceived as more supportive of the curriculum than other stakeholders.